

The Impact of Soldiers Well-being on Family Bonding

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Abstract

Military families comprised of service members, besides their spouses/partners, children, and extended family members. Family bonding is a feeling of closeness and caring towards one's parents and reflected in supposed monitoring, communication, involvement, and joint activities in the family. During military deployment, soldiers be able to experience in their assigned military unit that may challenge the importance of relationships and experiences within their ordinary families at home. A structural equation modelling generated by SmartPLS version 3.2.5 was employed to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument and thus test the research hypotheses. The outcomes of path model analysis showed four important findings: firstly, the relationship between religious beliefs significantly correlated with family bonding. Second, the relationship between medium of communication not significantly correlated with family bonding. Third, the relationship between family supports significantly correlated with family bonding. Fourth, the relationship between personal finance significantly correlated with family bonding. Statistically, this result confirms that proper soldier's well-being elements such as religious belief, family support and personal finance does act as an important determinant towards family bonding in the studied organizational area sample. In addition, discussion, implications and conclusion are elaborated.

Keywords: soldiers well-being, family bonding, Smart PLS

Introduction

The family is the basic unit of society. The bonds between husband and wife, parents and children, are so firmly planted in history and experience that often take them for granted. The strength of family bonds is crucial to a family’s capacity to provide, nurture, and care for its members. Frequent deployments, separations, and relocations are hallmarks of military life and can greatly affect military families. Many families have been able to cope with and overcome these difficulties, but others have needed additional support to recover from the stresses associated with military life (De Burgh et al., 2011).

It is crucial that family members are able to manage pressure from routine separation to maintain the values of both the family and military institution. Military personnel face stress such as moving from one place to another due to work demand (Jessica Ong et al., 2017). This includes geographical segregation and the lack of extended family support system, and the potential of military personnel to be assigned to a completely different environment. Even though stress can be managed well when being alone, many military personnel’s family members face stress (Black, 1993). For instance, it leaves family members in a great pressure when military personnel are assigned for certain duties away from their family. Family members who could not manage the separation period will lead to the weakening of the family system.

Families interact in a consistent way daily as they misinterpret demands with capabilities. Yet there are times when demands significantly outweigh a family’s capabilities, which can produce a crisis. A crisis often results in a major change in family structure or functioning patterns and can create a discontinuity in the family’s functioning (Meadows, 2015). Unfortunately, the theoretical and empirical literature examining soldiers’ well-being and family bonding is scarce, so our understanding of this distinction is limited. This study was conducted to measure four relationships. They are as follows: (1) The relationship between religious belief and family bonding; (2) the relationship between medium of communication and family bonding; (3) the relationship between family support and family bonding; and (4) the relationship between personal finance and family bonding.

Literature Review

Soldiers Well-being Elements and Family Bonding

In regard to the creation of family bonding, reflect the idea of the family as an island of security and togetherness in a somewhat hostile world, which may interfere with the family values and family cohesion. To keep up family togetherness through organization in the temporal sense, reflected activities that would demonstrate how to operate as a family, so that in life (family members) will know how a family's supposed to operate (Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Religious belief is the acceptance of the moral validity of the central social-value system. Religious orientation is identified by many researchers as being an important component of strong families' bond. The emphasis is that strong families bonding are guided by an underlying moral or value system shared by all members (Stinnett, 1986).

Personal finance on socioeconomic position affects the life course development and interrelationships of family members. Offering employees performance-based incentive pay is one common approach. Job performance-related pay and all three well-being outcomes indicates that employees may see increases in pay as a reasonable and even positive trade-off for contributing toward organizational success (Ogbonnaya, Daniels, & Nielsen, 2017).

The medium of communication patterns is one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of strong families bonding (Swihart, 1988). Swihart points out that communication skills are a particularly fruitful area in terms of intervention. Skill in communication and teaching families to communicate better has been a successful intervention technique and is the focus of many programs.

Family support will not be fruitful if not all members are willing to devote time and keep an open mind about planned activities intended for the entire group. Family roles and the lack of support by family members are seen to be a constraint that pulls people away from desired participation in their chosen hobby or serious work activity. (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Work is taking over the lives of many of individual and families today's fast-paced, global environment, and if do not guard against work-life imbalance, there could be

increasing work–family conflicts and stress resulting from long hours and workload escalation. Decrease in work–life balance has been linked to job implication such as higher unwanted turnover, lower physical and psychological well-being, lower productivity, greater stress-related ailments, and the like (Allen, 2000).

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

The literature has been used as foundation to develop a conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

Based on the framework, it can be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between religious belief and family bonding.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between medium of communication and family bonding.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between family support and family bonding.

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between personal finance and family bonding.

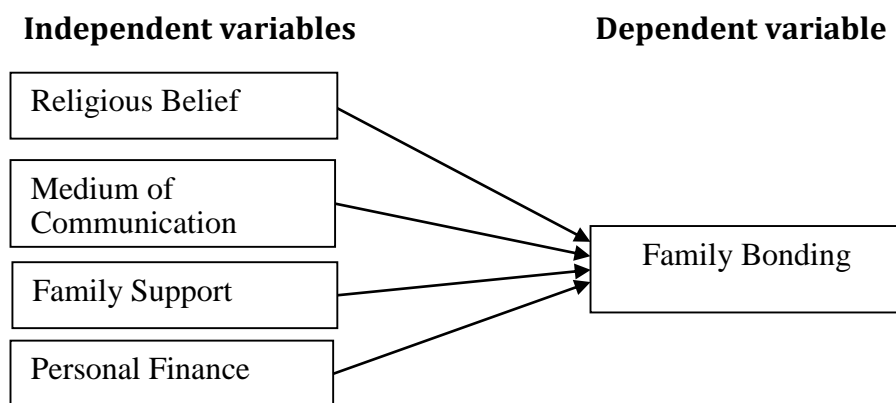


Figure 1: Relationship between soldiers well-being elements and family bonding.

Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional research design which allowed the researchers to integrate family bonding elements literature, a pilot study and the actual survey to gather data for the study. The use of this data collection method reduces bias and ensures high-

quality data (Cresswell, 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This study gathered data from the KD Selangor, KD Mahamiru, KD Indera Sakti, KD Jerai, KD Jebat, KD Penyu, KD Hang Tuah, and the KD Kinabalu that based at Lumut Naval Base, Perak. This unit serves as operations, training, logistic and administration under the auspices of the Royal Malaysian Navy. At the initial stage, a pilot study was conducted via a survey questionnaire with five experienced naval officers comprising a commanding officer, an officer executive officer, a religious officer, an administrative officer and a senior non-commission officer who had been involved in the management of the units. The information gathered from the naval officers helped the researchers to develop the content and format of the survey questionnaire for the actual research.

The survey questionnaires were developed from many validated scales Family Assessment Device (FAD) by Epstein et al., (1982): 7 items of religious belief, 4 items of medium of communication, 5 items of family support, 7 items of personal finance and 7 items of family bonding that were adapted from family bonding literature. All these items were measured using a seven-point scale ranging from "1 = very strongly disagree" to "7 = very strongly agree". Demographic variables were used as the controlling variables because this study focused on soldier family bonding.

The researchers had obtained official approval to conduct the study from Royal Malaysian Navy Headquarters' about the procedures of conducting surveys in a Lumut Naval Base, Perak. The targeted population for this study was 1,200 soldiers who served in a following ship: KD Selangor, KD Mahamiru, KD Indera Sakti, KD Jerai, KD Jebat, KD Penyu, KD Hang Tuah, and the KD Kinabalu in the Lumut Naval Base, Perak. A convenient sampling technique was used to distribute the survey questionnaires. The participation of the soldiers was completely voluntary. A total of 384 usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers, yielding a 90% response rate. The number of participants exceeded the minimum sample size of 30 required by probability sampling, showing that data may be analysed using inferential statistics (Chua, 2006; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Further, the SmartPLS version 3.2.5 as highly recommended by prominent scholars like Henseler et al. (2009), Hair et al. (2017), and Riggle et al., (2009) was employed to analyzed the survey questionnaires and test the research hypotheses.

Data analysis followed a step-by-step procedure: First, a validity test was performed to evaluate both convergent and discriminant validity. Second, a reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. Third, the structural model was assessed by examining the path coefficients using standardised betas (β) and t statistics. In addition, R^2 was used as an indicator of the overall predictive strength of the model. The values of R^2 were considered as follows: 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate) and 0.67 (substantial) (Chin, 1998; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

Results

In terms of sample profile, most respondents are male navy (90.4%), rank of *Laskar Kanan* or equivalent (40.1%), appointment as a *Kejuruteraan* (44.0%), unit placement at KD Hang Tuah (28.9%), aged group from 31 to 40 years old (49%), navy who served between 11 to 15 years (24.9%), SPM/MCE/SPMV holders (44%), and mostly frequency involved in operation more than 3 times a year (67.4%).

The outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis were shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows that military family bonding elements, and job implication had the values of average variance extracted (AVE) larger than 0.5, indicating that they met the acceptable standard of convergent validity (Henseler et.al, 2009; Barclay et.al, 1995; Fornell, & Larcker, 1981). Besides, the table shows that all constructs which had the diagonal values of \sqrt{AVE} were greater than the squared correlation with other constructs in off diagonal, showing that all constructs met the acceptable standard of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 1: The Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analyses

	AVE	Family Bonding	Family Support	Medium of Communication	Personal Finance	Religious Belief
Family Bonding	0.590	0.768				
Family Support	0.669	0.765	0.818			
Medium of Communication	0.625	0.699	0.687	0.791		

Personal Finance	0.575	0.742	0.602	0.609	0.758	
Religious Belief	0.667	0.733	0.641	0.694	0.636	0.816

Note: $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ shows in diagonal

Table 2 shows that all constructs loaded more strongly on their own constructs in the model, exceeding the specified minimum, 0.7, showing that the validity of measurement model met the criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Chin, 1998; Gefen & Straub, 2005). Besides, the composite reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha had values greater than 0.8, indicating that the instrument used in this study maintained high internal consistency (Henseler et al., 2009; Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). Figure 2 shows the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test to confirm the reliability and validity of data.

Figure 2: Outcome of CFA Testing

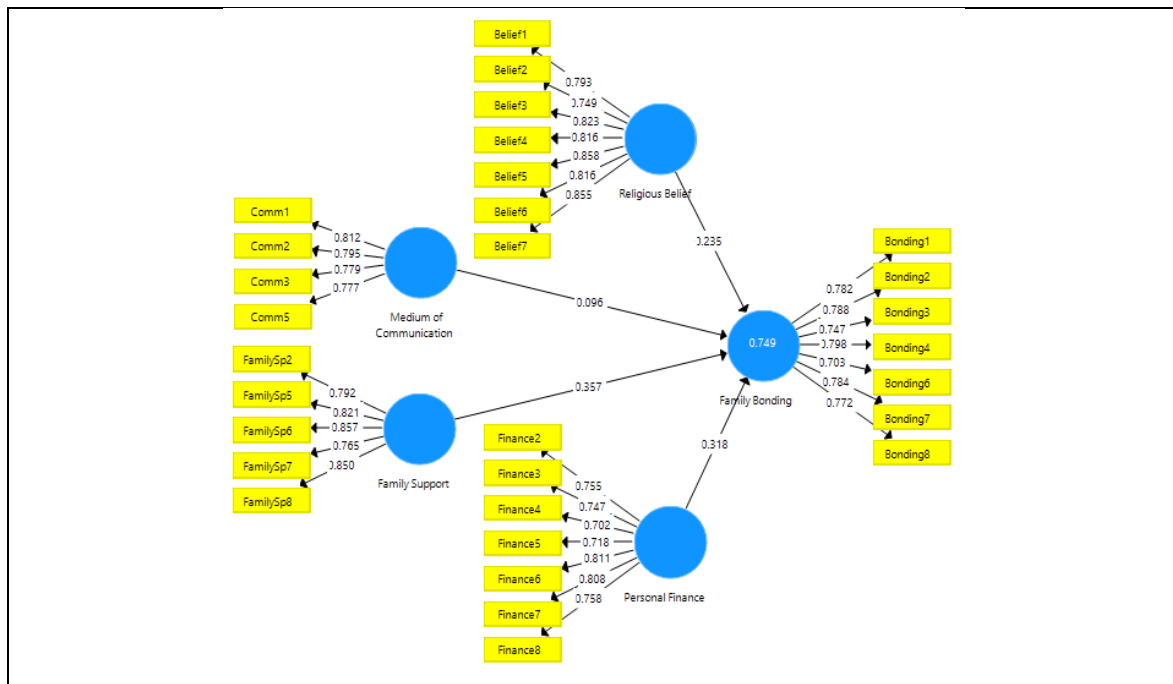


Table 2: The Results of Cross Loadings for Different Constructs and Construct Reliability Analysis

Construct	Number of Item	Cross Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Family Bonding	7	0.703 – 0.798	0.910	0.884
Family Support	5	0.765 – 0.850	0.910	0.876
Medium of Communication	4	0.777 – 0.812	0.870	0.801
Personal Finance	7	0.702 – 0.811	0.904	0.877
Religious Belief	7	0.749 – 0.858	0.933	0.916

Figure 3 and Table 3 shows the outcomes of testing SmartPLS path model using bootstrapping procedure. The value of R^2 is used as an indicator of the overall predictive strength of the model. The value of R^2 is interpreted as follows: 0.19, weak; 0.33, moderate; and 0.67, substantial (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2009; Wetzels et al., 2009). In this model testing, the inclusion of family support, medium of communication, personal finance, and religious belief in the analysis had explained 74.9 percent of the variance in family bonding. The results of SmartPLS path model analysis revealed four important findings as shown in Figure 3 and Table 3. The hypothesis H1, H2, H3, and H4 are significantly correlated, therefore H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported. In overall, this result demonstrates that family support, medium of communication, personal finance, and religious belief is an important determinant of family bonding in the studied organization.

Figure 3: Outcome of Testing Hypotheses

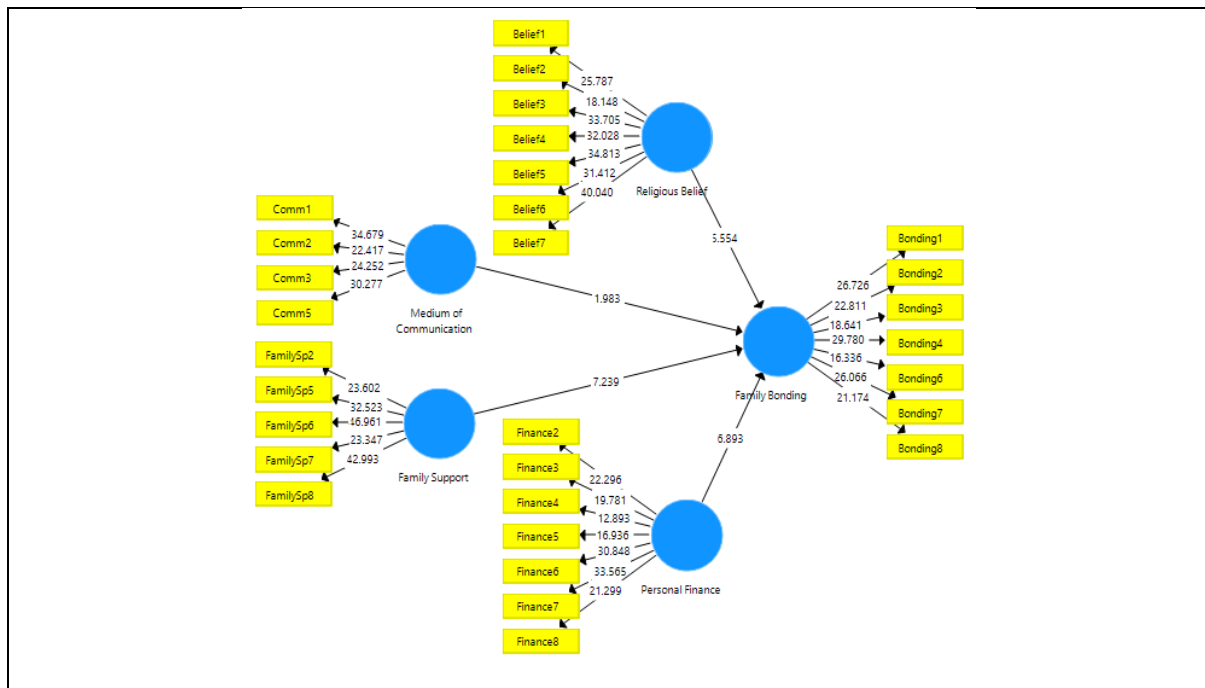


Table 3: Outcomes of Testing SmartPLS Path Model

Relationships	β	t	P value	R ²
H1: Religious Belief -> Family Bonding	0.235	5.554	0.000	0.749
H2: Medium of Communication -> Family Bonding	0.096	1.983	0.048	
H3: Family Support -> Family Bonding	0.357	7.239	0.066	
H4: Personal Finance -> Family Bonding	0.318	6.893	0.000	

Note: Significant at *t \geq 1.96; **t \geq 2.57; ***t \geq 3.29

Discussion and Conclusion

The organization should define family bonding for programs and specify components or outcomes to target in order to better understand how programs help service members and their families. Definitions, models, frameworks, and outcomes should be explicitly defined in written policy. The family bonding program in respective organization should have a “road map” that follows established programs, policies, and definitions, ensuring that all stakeholders know their role and how they contribute to the success of the overall family bonding program. Different stakeholders in the military (e.g., medical, youth

coordinators, religious heads, and family advocates) make different contributions to family bonding, but there are few mechanisms to unify them and their efforts. Family bonding must have a clear definition and set of outcomes or goals. Agencies must have a clear understanding of how they contribute to the whole, as well as to organizational structure, command, and authority.

The findings of this study had confirmed that family support, medium of communication, personal finance, and religious belief practices in studied organization does act as an important determinant of family bonding. In the context of this study, well exposed military family with religious activities in the unit contributes to better family bonding. According to the majority of the respondents, the levels of family support, medium of communication, personal finance, and religious belief and family bonding are substantial. This situation posits that majority of respondents feel that proper plan on religious programed will increase military family bonding and enhance soldiers well-being. This study provides significant insights into three major aspects namely, theoretical contribution, robustness of research methodology and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study reveals that family support, medium of communication, personal finance, and religious belief are important determinants of family bonding. Regarding the robustness of research methodology, the survey questionnaire used in this study has exceeded the minimum standard of validity and reliability analyses; this is necessary to produce accurate and reliable findings. With respect to practical contribution, the findings of this study may be used as useful indicators by respective studied units to upgrade the military family bonding programme in order to cope with current challenges in administration of the soldiers well-being in the unit. With proper military family bonding are given more attention, it's may help the unit to manage their soldiers at both individual and group levels to enhance positive job satisfaction. As a result, the units need to put military soldiers well-being elements and family bonding into practice as it ensures the ultimate and the continuous success of the unit. In future the perception of military soldiers well-being elements and family bonding should be expanded by adding more variables to enhance the contribution towards this topic.

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